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ABSTRACT

New Jersey has proposed state and local programs to help solve educational problems in the areas of the teaching profession, student performance, and educational leadership. To continue a supply of talented teachers, the state has developed initiatives such as a minimum salary increase, a recruitment program for top high school graduates, reformed certification standards and procedures, financial incentives and professional recognition, and new guidelines for seniority. In the area of student performance, New Jersey has increased the rigor and scope of its graduation test, established new English standards for bilingual education, and instituted several programs to improve student behavior. Higher standards for educational leadership have also been set at the state and local levels. For example, the State Department of Education has been reorganized, regional curriculum service units have been set up, the local district monitoring system has been refined, new standards for effective management and financial practices have been put in place, new programs in science, math and computer, and vocational education have been designed, and initiatives to address deficiencies at the district and individual school level have been proposed. Through these reforms, New Jersey has dedicated itself to facing today's educational problems today. (GJ)

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Thomas H. Kean
Governor

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NEW JERSEY'S DESIGN FOR EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

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"NEW JERSEY CLAIMS NO UNIVERSAL CURES OR 'QUICK FIXES.' RATHER, WE HAVE PROPOSED PROGRAMS AFTER CAREFUL STUDY, DELIBERATION AND CONSULTATION. . . . SINCE WE BELIEVE STRONGLY IN THESE PROGRAMS, WE ARE PREPARED TO BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR RESULTS."

PREFACE

In September 1983, before a joint session of the state legislature, I told the people of New Jersey that education had become an urgent issue and that to ignore it would imperil our future.

Even before I spoke, the State Department of Education had, at my direction, begun planning and setting into motion an innovative program for the improvement of New Jersey's schools. Under the guidance of Commissioner Saul Cooperman and the State Board of Education, the department had carefully and systematically analyzed educational problems throughout the state. Its research turned up weaknesses that were later confirmed by national reports detailing the broader crises confronting America's schools.

The problems identified in New Jersey's schools fell into three major areas. There were concerns about the profession of teaching, about the expectations for student performance and about the effectiveness of educational leadership.

To address these three broad issues, New Jersey claims no universal cures or "quick fixes." Rather, we have proposed programs only after careful study, deliberation and consultation with educators, parents, business leaders and many other citizens. Since we believe strongly in these programs, we are prepared to be held accountable for their results.

In this pamphlet we present the specifics of our programs and demonstrate how they fit into a larger pattern of reform. This pattern can be likened to a mosaic, which can only be viewed as a complete picture when one steps back from its individual parts. In this case, the picture of educational improvements in New Jersey can be seen as taking shape around one major theme–a design to raise educational standards.

It must be made clear that we are not discussing standards in the abstract. We are talking about raising specific standards to achieve our most critical objective, that of improved learning for New Jersey's students.

If our students are to gain the skills they need for the future, if they are to be able to read and analyze, think and write, compute and apply their computations, identify problems and weigh solutions for themselves, we must all work together to raise standards and improve their learning now.

Tom Kean

Thomas H. Kean
Governor
June 1985

RAISED STANDARDS FOR A REVITALIZED TEACHING PROFESSION

Teachers are the backbone of any educational system. Without a qualified, well-prepared and energetic teaching corps, education–let alone educational improvement–cannot take place. The climb to higher standards, therefore, will not be successful unless our students obtain the most effective classroom instruction possible. To assure a continued supply of talented teachers, New Jersey has developed a number of initiatives aimed at recruiting outstanding candidates and retaining the excellent teachers currently in our classrooms.

MINIMUM STARTING SALARY

One concrete reason that teaching has had difficulty attracting the most qualified candidates is the profession's starting salaries. With the 1984-85 average beginning pay in New Jersey just below $15,000, salaries for teaching cannot adequately compete with those of most other professions. To remedy this problem, Governor Thomas H. Kean has called for legislation that would set a *minimum salary of $18,500* for all first-year teachers in New Jersey public schools. This proposal would use state funds in the most cost-effective way to make up the difference between a district's current starting salary and the state-mandated minimum.

GOVERNOR'S TEACHING SCHOLARS

In addition to raising salaries for beginning teachers, Governor Kean and the State Department of Education have begun a plan to attract talented high school students to teaching in New Jersey. This program, to begin in the fall of 1986, will recruit 100 top high school graduates each year into the teaching profession by offering to fund all or part of their college educations in return for service in the state's public schools. These students, who will have to meet rigorous academic and personal criteria, will be able to apply for as much as $7,500 a year in education loans. The state will forgive up to the full amount of these loans ($30,000) for students who teach in New Jersey public schools for a specified number of years.

CERTIFICATION REFORM

Two factors emerged when the State Department of Education examined future prospects for recruiting talented teacher candidates. The first was that half of the teachers currently in the classroom will either retire or change careers in the next decade. The second was that the quality of students in college teacher-training programs, as indicated by their scores on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and other standardized examinations, had declined. Recent studies show that the test scores of education majors rank among the lowest of any college group.

Faced with the need for more teachers and the weakness of current candidates, the state acted both to attract new teachers to the profession and to make certain that all new teachers meet fair but rigorous standards for their training and licensing.

Thus, New Jersey has, on the one hand, reformed and strengthened requirements for the traditional or "college route" to certification, and has, on the other hand, created an "alternate route" or non-traditional means to acquire certification.

New Jersey has also raised standards by virtually eliminating "emergency certification" (with specific exceptions in such fields as bilingual, vocational and special education). Emergency certification was the non-system by which districts were allowed to hire almost anyone to teach for specified periods, regardless of educational background, teaching experience or possession of a college degree.

In addition, this year for the first time, teacher candidates from either the college or alternate routes are required to pass *competency tests* in the subjects they wish to teach.

- **COLLEGE TEACHER TRAINING**–Recognizing a lack of consistency and rigor in college teacher preparation programs, the state set out to strengthen them. The State Department of Education had found, for example, that courses *required* at one college were not even *offered* at another. Prospective teachers must now study the essentials of the teaching profession (as identified for New Jersey by a panel of nationally renowned educators appointed by the Governor and chaired by Dr. Ernest L. Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching). However, teachers in training are now required to spend considerably more time concentrating directly on the subject matter they will be teaching.
- **THE "ALTERNATE ROUTE"**–Starting in September of 1985, prospective teachers in New Jersey may take advantage of an alternative to the traditional, college-based path to achieve certification. Faced with shortages of talented teachers, the department, following the recommendations of a broad-based state advisory committee, developed the *Provisional Teacher Program*, or the "alternate route" to teacher certification. This program allows experienced teachers in private schools, working scientists, computer specialists, journalists and others who would like to teach, an opportunity to enter the profession.

A candidate for this program must already possess a bachelor's degree, must pass a competency test in the subject he or she wishes to teach, and must be hired by a school district to fill a vacancy. The provisional teacher must then undergo a one-year, state-approved district training program. If successful, the provisional teacher is eligible to seek full certification.

Increasingly, fine teachers have been leaving the profession for more lucrative and prestigious jobs in business and industry. Therefore, if we are to raise standards, once talented people are attracted to teaching, they must be offered financial incentives, professional recognition and opportunities for professional renewal to keep them in the classrooms. That is why New Jersey has developed several programs to recognize outstanding teachers and to stress the *professionalism* of teaching.

THE ACADEMY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF TEACHING AND MANAGEMENT

In January 1985, the Academy for the Advancement of Teaching and Management opened its doors to teachers and administrators. Teams of teachers and their building principals from 61 schools were trained in proven teaching techniques during the academy's first program. Partic-

ipants continued to have their skills reinforced back in their own classrooms by academy instructors, and they will return to the academy for a refresher course. During the summer of 1985, the academy will offer a course on methods of instructional supervision for principals and supervisors and, in January 1986, plans call for the introduction of the first program in school management skills for administrators. In future years, the academy will offer additional programs that will enhance student learning by improving techniques in teaching and school management.

GOVERNOR'S TEACHER GRANT PROGRAM

Creative teachers are constantly developing effective ways to improve their students' learning. To recognize such teachers, the state is now offering approximately 30 grants of up to $15,000 each to teachers who have developed effective classroom strategies. Teachers will be chosen under strict eligibility requirements, and the results of their efforts, if proven successful, will be shared widely, so that their projects can become models for other teachers and school districts. Thus, this grant program will recognize excellent teachers and extend their efforts to help increase student learning in many classrooms.

THE MASTER TEACHER PROGRAM

This year, for the first time, New Jersey is recognizing its master teachers, superior teachers who can serve as role models for their colleagues. In April 1985, boards of education in the Newark and Pinelands Regional school districts, following guidelines set down by the Governor's Commission on Master Teachers, chose up to five percent of their teaching staffs for the honor. These master teachers will receive $5,000 annual stipends for such extra duties as conducting research, tutoring students or devising new instructional approaches. If successful, this three-year pilot program may be expanded to include other school districts in the state.

COMMISSIONER'S AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING TEACHERS

The Commissioner's Awards for Outstanding Teachers will be presented each summer and are another way New Jersey will acknowledge superior teachers. One hundred of the state's best teachers will be chosen to receive awards and to attend a three-day workshop during the summer. These teachers will receive the recognition they deserve and the honor of participating in professional seminars, where they will meet and exchange ideas with prominent educators and their peers from across the state.

SUBJECT-MATTER SENIORITY

A change in the way teacher seniority is calculated has helped to ensure that our students are taught by the most professional and knowledgeable teachers.

In the past, New Jersey allowed teachers to gain seniority in subject areas or grade levels for which they were certified, whether they had actually taught these subjects or grade levels or not.

Under the new rules, teachers can earn seniority only in the subject-matter fields and grade levels in which they *have been certified* and *have taught*. This means that school districts

involved in the unpleasant task of reducing staff will now be able to retain the most experienced, highly qualified teachers–professionals with the most current, pertinent knowledge and experience. The new seniority system is not only more equitable for faculty but for students as well, because it places the highest priority on the pupils' instructional needs. ■

RAISED STANDARDS FOR STUDENTS

The New Jersey educational initiatives already described deal with reforms to revitalize the teaching profession, reforms that will ultimately raise standards and improve the learning experiences of students. The state has also raised expectations for students themselves.

MASTERY OF BASIC SKILLS

If New Jersey's young people are to be prepared for an increasingly complex and technological world, schools must challenge them to work toward their highest levels of achievement. Academic standards must be fair, yet rigorous enough to assure that the high school diploma means graduates can read, write, compute and reason at levels which will permit them to become independent and productive members of society.

Yet, all too common are reports from prestigious national panels, colleges, the armed forces and New Jersey employers indicating that high school graduates have difficulty reading, writing and using mathematics to solve problems.

In 1978, as a first step toward making certain New Jersey's students were realistically prepared for the work places and world they will face, the state instituted the Minimum Basic Skills (MBS) test. As a result of legislation in 1979, this test became a graduation requirement for all students beginning with the ninth-grade class of 1981-82.

But, that was just a *first step*. The MBS test measures only *minimum* skills, not the skills needed to compete in today's technological society. So, as an important part of the drive toward higher standards, the MBS is being phased out and replaced as a graduation test by the new and more demanding High School Proficiency Test (HSPT).

The HSPT, which will become the graduation test for the 1985-86 freshman class, was developed with the assistance of a broad-based panel. It tests those more complex skills, such as the ability to interpret reading passages and to solve multiple-step math problems, that students will need to perform successfully on the job or in college.

As part of its added rigor, the HSPT also tests students' writing skills by requiring them to *write a coherent essay*. The students' abilities to express themselves precisely in writing is a good indicator of their capacity to think clearly and logically.

Local school districts have the responsibility to revise their curricula in order to prepare their students for the more difficult HSPT. However, the State Department of Education is assisting the districts as they prepare students for a tougher exam. For instance, the department has already provided educators with *skills arrays*, guides to the knowledge areas and abilities students are expected to master at various grade levels. The department is also preparing publications for teachers and students, and training assistance for teachers and administrators, all geared to ensure that students are taught the skills required by the HSPT.

After the HSPT has been administered, it can be used to measure student performance and to identify strengths and weaknesses in the curricula of particular school districts. Using the results from the HSPT and other tests required under a new, comprehensive statewide testing system, districts can provide remediation for individual students and continually adjust their courses of

study and instruction to help all students meet higher standards.

Although the transition from the MBS (and its stress on *minimum* competencies) to the more difficult HSPT (and its emphasis on more rigorous competencies) will not be easy, it is essential. The HSPT represents a major step forward in New Jersey's quest for higher educational standards.

BILINGUAL EDUCATION

New Jersey has also instituted its first set of standards to assure that students with limited proficiency in English graduate from high school prepared for careers or post-secondary education.

Research has shown that it takes two to three years to be able to function at a basic level in a new language and an additional two or three years to become fully proficient. As a result, students of limited proficiency in English who enter New Jersey schools before the ninth grade are now expected to meet all high school graduation requirements and to pass the state graduation test in *English*.

Students with limited proficiency in English who enter in grades 9 through 12, on the other hand, must be allowed some flexibility in demonstrating mastery of the basic skills. They must meet the same credit, curriculum and attendance requirements as other students and must take the graduation test in English. If they cannot pass the High School Proficiency Test in English, however, their skills will then be evaluated through a Special Review Assessment in their native language, English, or a combination of both. Nevertheless, they must pass a test of English fluency, demonstrating that they can understand, converse, read and write on a basic level in English.

New Jersey's new standards for students with limited proficiency in English maintain the integrity of the state's high school diploma. These new standards also recognize the realistic need for English competency in an English-speaking society.

In addition to setting standards and pursuing the present method by which students are progressively exposed to English (bilingual transitional education), New Jersey is one of four states in the nation participating in a project based upon a "structured immersion strategy." This strategy represents another possible way to teach students whose dominant language is not English. In these selected immersion projects, classes are conducted almost exclusively in English and include the study of the students' native language and culture. These pilot programs are open to approximately 200 students whose parents consent to their participation.

STUDENT BEHAVIOR

Higher standards for students in academic skills alone are not enough. To further improve the learning environment in schools, it is time to demand higher standards of student behavior. Disruptive students not only impede their own education, they have a negative effect on other students and the whole school.

As part of the new monitoring system by which school systems receive state approval, all districts must demonstrate that they have "provisions for identifying and providing for pupils

who disrupt the educational program." Board members, administrators and teachers must now work together to define the limits of acceptable and unacceptable behavior, as well as the consequences of unacceptable behavior in their schools.

Several additional state programs directly address students' responsibility for their behavior:

- **CODES OF CONDUCT**–In 1980 the State Board of Education adopted a resolution encouraging district boards of education, in cooperation with teachers, students and parents, to develop policies with respect to student rights and responsibilities, and to develop student codes of conduct. The state is now urging districts to update their policies or make them more stringent, so that the rules which govern the behavior of students, and the responsibilities of the staff and parents for enforcing these rules, are clear to all.

- **PROJECT ON EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT BEHAVIOR**–Though educators want to prevent and redirect unruly student behavior, they must avoid emphasizing only the negative side of pupils' conduct. Positive motivation and self-direction are critical.

  Therefore, the State Department of Education, in conjunction with the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, has developed a program to identify and encourage students' commendable behavior, the kind of behavior that creates a school atmosphere conducive to learning. This program, to be established during the 1985-86 school year, includes demonstration projects, materials and information that can be used throughout the state to accentuate the positive in student behavior.

- **URBAN EDUCATION INITIATIVE**–One of the most important goals of the state's Urban Initiative is the reduction of disruptive behavior. To this end, the State Department of Education is working intensively with three urban school districts to reduce their incidences of unruly behavior by 40 percent:
  - Two of the districts have designed plans for alternative education that place disruptive students with mentors and/or in jobs during the day, and in classrooms and counseling after regular school hours.
  - The third district will turn part of a junior high school into an alternative school for disruptive pupils that will not only emphasize academics and counseling, but will also provide hands-on experience with computers.

  In addition, state educators are working with five other urban districts to reduce disruptive behavior. (For a more detailed discussion of the Urban Initiative, see pp. 13-14.)

- **GRANTS FOR REDUCING STUDENT DISRUPTION**– The Governor has requested $1 million to fund additional programs to deal with the behavior of disruptive students in grades seven through twelve. Grants to school districts will allow them to begin alternative education programs that will, among other things, reduce dropout rates and integrate academics with students' work experiences. These programs will also maintain close contact with the students' families and will enlist the help of

community businesses and service organizations. Successful projects will become models for other school districts.

- **PROGRAMS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS**–Some of the most difficult behavior problems arise with students in special education. That is why the State Department of Education's Division of Special Education has begun a three-year program with 10 secondary schools throughout the state aimed at improving programs and services for students classified as emotionally disturbed. Besides offering the services and support of six of the division's staff members, the program involves such activities as:
  - A family counseling program to help parents cope with and change their children's behavior.
  - Intensive in-service workshops for non-special education teachers, so they can gain a better understanding of the needs of students in special education.
  - The use of professional intervention counselors from outside the school to work with students. ■

RAISED STANDARDS FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

Besides asking more of its teachers and students, New Jersey is setting higher standards for education leaders at both the state and local levels.

THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

When it demanded higher standards for students, educators and the teaching profession in the state, the New Jersey State Department of Education made equal demands on itself. Improving the performance of the department was an essential step in raising standards for all. As one of his first acts as Commissioner of Education, Dr. Saul Cooperman ordered a comprehensive internal review that reorganized the entire department, streamlining and targeting its operations. Reorganization also significantly reduced staff and the number of managers.

More importantly, reorganization readied the department for an increasingly active role in fulfilling its newly identified *core mission* to ensure "continued educational improvement for all public school students in kindergarten through grade twelve."

STATE ASSISTANCE TO SCHOOL DISTRICTS

In accordance with its mission to focus on more effective student learning, the State Department of Education also created a new system for helping local school districts. Three regional curriculum services units (RCSUs) were established to serve as the vital links between the department and the local schools. Not only do RCSUs provide state-developed instructional programs and in-service training for the staffs of local districts, they also distribute curriculum materials and information, and link local districts with successful educational programs.

STATE REGULATION AND REVIEW OF DISTRICTS

In the past, the state annually reviewed local school districts for state approval. This evaluation process, called monitoring, demanded extensive paperwork, time and resources, both on the local and state levels.

To improve efficiency and raise standards for local education leaders, the department, acting on the recommendations of a state advisory committee, has refined this monitoring system. Instead of reviewing more than 300 items every year, the department now focuses on 51 key factors within 10 essential areas, areas such as the district's financial management, facilities, planning, curriculum, basic skills achievement, faculty, and relationship with the community.

Under this new system, when a school district is approved, the approval is granted for *five* years. This five-year cycle frees state officials to spend more time assisting those districts with problems in meeting the monitoring standards. Just as important, the five-year cycle frees administrators and faculty in approved school districts to concentrate on improving educational opportunities for their students.

Each year, districts are required to announce their educational objectives publicly and, moreover, to indicate how they plan to meet them. The state reviews each district's objectives, plans and progress, and the public is kept informed.

SCHOOL DISTRICT FISCAL AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

Districts are also being held to high standards for effective management and financial practices. Under its new *Compliance Intervention Plan*, the New Jersey State Department of Education has, for the first time, established a special unit that will follow specific procedures for investigating and intervening in those few local school districts where there is evidence of improper management or fiscal practices. This plan helps assure that tax dollars earmarked for education are, in fact, spent on education.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Just as school districts must be financially responsible, New Jersey wants to ensure that school districts' instructional programs meet high standards. Three examples are:

- **SCIENCE EDUCATION**–In the past few decades, as many national reports on education have pointed out, changes in science have been extremely rapid. The accelerated pace of these changes threatens to widen the gap between what children are taught about science and the actual state of advancement in the field.

  New Jersey has begun to address this problem with several projects:

  - ☐ Programs in *elementary science* are being developed to make science come alive, with hands-on experience for pre-kindergarten through eighth grade students. As a key part of this program, the department, in conjunction with New Jersey's science teachers and supervisors, is designing a *model science curriculum* that will be available in modular units for school districts to use if they so wish.
  - ☐ *Partnerships with business, industry* and other private and public agencies will provide such cooperative ventures as equipment-on-loan programs and technical training for students and teachers. These ventures will integrate new technologies into classroom study and will promote interaction among scientists, teachers and students.
  - ☐ A program for *technological literacy* will give students the opportunity to acquire the knowledge they need to become productive citizens.

- **COMPUTER AND MATH EDUCATION**–Computer science is one of the most rapidly changing technologies today. The State Department of Education has developed projects to help educators and students keep up with this vital field and to raise standards in the teaching of mathematics:
  - ☐ The department has established three *regional computer demonstration centers* to provide hands-on training for teachers.
  - ☐ In cooperation with the New Jersey Network and the New Jersey Institute of Technology, the department has provided educators with the *Academy on Computers*, a program for computer literacy that includes a broadcast and videotaped

series, in-service workshops, training materials, manuals, newsletters and software.

- With the support of the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation and the New Jersey School Boards Association, the education department has arranged an initial, free statewide subscription to *EPIE (Educational Products Information Exchange)*, a technical evaluation service that helps educators select microcomputer hardware and software.
- The State Department of Education, in cooperation with the Department of Higher Education, has supported an *Algebra Curriculum Development Project* in 16 pilot school districts. This project encourages teachers to stress realistic applications for algebra skills and emphasizes *understanding* instead of rote learning.
- Together with the Department of Higher Education, the State Department of Education has helped plan and implement 40 *state grants* for programs at colleges throughout the state that update teachers in other technological, mathematical and scientific areas. These programs include a regional consortium of secondary and college science faculty linked through an electronic network and projects to attract more qualified women and minority candidates to teach math and science. In addition, *grants* from *federal funds* are being awarded to help New Jersey's school districts improve programs, instruction and teacher skills in computer education, mathematics and science.

■ **VOCATIONAL EDUCATION**–In the field of vocational education, New Jersey also seeks to ensure that students are well prepared for a rapidly changing world.

The *Vocational Education Placement Awards Program* has moved in the direction of guaranteeing instructional effectiveness. These awards honor the schools and school districts that place the highest proportion of their graduates in full-time jobs for which they have been trained. There can be no better test of the relevance and usefulness of a vocational program than the ability of its graduates to gain employment in their areas of preparation.

URBAN INITIATIVE

American education faces perhaps no more difficult and persistent a challenge than that posed by our urban schools, where, despite the efforts of many hardworking and dedicated educators, problems such as low test scores, high absenteeism, disruption, substance abuse and high youth unemployment too often occur.

New Jersey is committed to seeking solutions to the problems of urban schools in many ways. The Urban Initiative, a long-term, collaborative effort with educators in the urban districts, represents one major approach. This initiative is providing guidance and support to local school systems so they can help themselves.

The Urban Initiative offers New Jersey's 56 urban school districts assistance through two plans. The first, *concentrated* aspect of the initiative is called *Operation School Renewal.*

Three urban districts, East Orange, Neptune Township and Trenton, have been selected to participate in this three-year pilot program. Each district has developed a comprehensive plan to address its own specific needs in the following areas:

- Raising test scores in mathematics, reading and writing.
- Increasing the effectiveness of principals.
- Reducing disruptive behavior.
- Improving student attendance.
- Increasing youth employment through vocational education.

The second, *broad-based* aspect of the initiative helps any participating urban district address several issues.

- Improving instruction in writing.
- Improving pupils' reading skills.
- Improving students' mathematics skills.
- Reducing disruptive behavior in schools.
- Treating and preventing abuse of drugs and alcohol.
- Increasing educational opportunities for secondary special education students, particularly the emotionally disturbed.
- Enabling compensatory education and bilingual students to fulfill high school graduation requirements.
- Making greater and more appropriate use of computers in the schools.
- Increasing employment opportunities for vocational education students.
- Helping young dropouts to earn high school diplomas.

Results of both Operation School Renewal and the broad-based part of the initiative will be carefully evaluated so that the lessons learned can be shared with other districts.

New Jersey's Urban Initiative challenges the dangerous assumption that students in urban districts cannot be expected to meet the same graduation standards as those in non-urban schools. The goal is to raise standards for *all*. Urban students, like their peers in suburban and rural districts, must be prepared to function effectively in the society of today and of tomorrow.

EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

While the Urban Initiative addresses specific district-wide deficiencies, the Effective Schools Initiative is designed to improve the performance of the *individual school as a whole*.

The Effective Schools Initiative proceeds from several basic assumptions: that all students can learn; that effective schools appear to share certain common qualities; and that a fertile learning environment can indeed enhance student learning.

New Jersey is confronting the challenge of translating effective schools research into effective schools reality. The state is making a three-year commitment to effective schools with pilot projects in at least 12 schools across the state. Although these schools may be chosen from among suburban and rural districts, the primary focus of this initiative will be on schools from urban areas.

The projects in the schools that are selected will employ a comprehensive approach to student improvement by looking at the ways the principal and the teaching staff, the students and

parents and the school curriculum all interact. The State Department of Education will provide districts and schools with instructional expertise, course materials and support through its regional curriculum services units. Additional help will be sought from higher education, business and industry. ■

CONCLUSION

New Jersey has set in motion a number of reforms at both the state and local levels. But these individual programs, like the individual pieces of a larger mosaic, cannot be fully understood by examining them one at a time. New Jersey's larger design–raising educational standards to improve student learning–is the important one, and the design we will continue refining until it is fully shaped.

New Jersey has dedicated itself to facing today's educational problems today. The future of our young people, and the future of our society in the next century, depends on our action now.

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